

BRITISH POLICIES IN IRAN DURING THE
WAR

The above remarks concerning the tribes provide a convenient approach to an analysis of British policy in Iran. The tribal sector reveals several features typical of general British attitudes. These features may be listed as follows:

(1) Having occupied Iran to assure a smooth flow of supplies to

Russia, the British, in the immediate sense, were primarily interested

in maintaining order and security in the country.

Hence they favored

all conservative elements and opposed all elements threatening

change, disorder, and confusion.

(2) Since oil supplies for the Royal Navy were vital in the prosecution

of the war, the British opposed any radical labor tendencies that

might have impeded the production of oil in Khuzistan.

By the same

token the British were prepared to establish

agreements with the

tribes to ensure the security of wells, pipe lines, and refineries.

(3) Faithful to their traditional long-range policy of treating Iran

as a buffer between Russia and their possessions, the

British regarded

their occupation only as a wartime expedient. The

permanent division

of Iran into British and Soviet spheres of

influence or zones of

occupation did not suit their purposes. They had

more to lose than

to gain by such forceful division. Their losses would be:

(a) the drain

on the treasury of maintaining the requisite military forces; (b) the

danger of Soviet proximity to India and the Persian Gulf; (c) the

danger that Soviet occupation of the north might permit infiltration

and bolshevization of the whole of Iran; and (d) the

charge of aggressive

imperialism by public opinion in the Middle East.

There would be no gains to compensate these losses. Hence British policy sought to assure speedy evacuation of *all* foreign troops at the conclusion of the war.

(4) Since the British were interested in the independence of Iran, they favored the strengthening of the Iranian government. This did not keep them, however, from supporting elements that would strongly oppose subversive activities and Soviet encroachments in the event of government failure.

(5) Because Soviet policy was dedicated to forceful change, and